DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 931 CG 016 339

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TITLE Laboratory Training for Clinical Supervisors: An Update.
PUB DATE Aug 82
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (90th, Washington, DC, August 23-27, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counselor Attitudes; Counselor Evaluation; *Counselor Training; Ethical Instruction; Evaluation Methods; Graduate Students; Higher Education; *Laboratory Training; Leadership Styles; Practicums; Program Descriptions; Supervisor Qualifications; *Supervisory Methods; *Supervisory Training

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a prepracticum laboratory in supervision skills, developed at Purdue University for counseling psychology students and others as a prerequisite to a practicum in supervision. The three parts of the supervision lab are described in detail including: (1) an initial analysis phase in which participants identify their baseline behavioral styles, i.e., a focus on process or role behaviors; (2) training to compensate for the idiosyncratic styles which have been identified through a presentation of a series of models, i.e., the Discrimination Model, Interpersonal Process Recall, Microtraining, and live supervision; and (3) a final unit presenting segments on evaluation and ethical situations. A discussion of the effects of the prepracticum lab along with issues to be addressed in the future, e.g., questions relating to the timing of supervision for both supervisor and counselor, is presented in the final section. (PAS)

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ED223931

LABORATORY TRAINING FOR CLINICAL SUPERVISORS: AN UPDATE

by

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Presented at the 1982 APA Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., August 1982

Title of symposium: Sources of supervisory impact and models for training psychological supervisors.

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A Laboratory Training for Clinical Supervisors:

An Update

I would like to describe, as briefly as possible, the prepracticum laboratory in supervision skills that we have developed at Purdue University. A more elaborated description of the training program appeared in the December, 1981 issue of Professional Psychology (Bernard, 1981) for those of you who would like a more detailed account of what we do. The supervision lab has also been used as inservice training for experienced supervisors. I will comment later on the reactions of the different groups to the training.

The first point I would like to stress is the advantage of this training as a prepracticum. (As such, the lab is not meant to be a complete training model. More subtle and many developmental issues need to be covered in practicum and beyond.) All too often, the little training we have offered our graduate students in supervision has been offered while they were in the process of supervising less-experienced counselors. Having been exposed to this model, I realized that training always becomes secondary to the immediate needs of trainees and clients--and this is as it should be. However, the result is random and incomplete training, at best. Our solution has been to offer a compact package (16 hours of training) for zero credit, but as a prerequisite to a practicum in supervision. Our counseling psychology students have not balked at such an arrangement. In fact, students from two other departments (clinical psychology and marriage and family therapy) have consistently asked permission to participate in the training. Therefore, the administrative dilemma of credit hour loads and "fitting in another course" has not been an issue.

The supervision lab is divided into three parts: twenty-five percent of

the time is given to establishing baseline behavior. An assumption of the lab is that students arrive with "supervision skills," whether or not they have been involved in the actual process of supervision. Each person has an idiosyncratic style for observing and processing behavior in meaningful ways, and for communicating this meaning to others. Most lab participants are not aware of their baseline behavior. Two different baselines are identified: (1) focus behavior, that is, the participants' selective attention to either process issues, conceptual issues or personal issues while observing a counseling session; and (2) role behavior, whether the participant relies on teacher behaviors, therapist behaviors, or consultant behaviors while in the process of supervision. These three focus areas and three role options comprise the Discrimination Model (Bernard, 1979) of supervision. Students identify their primary focus and primary role through simulated activities and an analysis of audiotaped supervision session.

Once the student has a fairly good grasp of his or her baseline behavior, a series of models is presented in order to expand the participant's style. Thus, this second part of training includes: The Discrimination Model (Bernard, 1979); Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan, 1976); Microtraining (Ivey, 1971); and Live Supervision (Haley, 1976; Montalvo, 1973). These models were chosen because they are sufficiently distinct from one another, straightforward in their application, and compatible with the language used while establishing baselines behaviors. I would like to spend just a moment discussing each model.

As was stated earlier, the language used in the first part of the lab is derived from the Discrimination Model. Therefore, at this point, we train participants to compensate for their idiosyncratic style. For instance, if a student naturally tends to focus on process skills and uses the teacher role in supervision, he or she is given practice in the consultant and counselor

roles while focusing on conceptualization and personal issues in counseling, etc.

The next model, Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) is an important part of training because it asks that the supervisor screen out the teacher role (something most new supervisors find difficult). The task for the supervisor is to help the counselor focus on conceptualizations that were missed or skimmed-over in the counseling session. IPR slows the process down for the supervisor and counselor, and allows for greater depth in dealing with key points in the counseling interview.

Microtraining offers an excellent balance to IPR because it emphasizes the teacher role and stresses process skills. Microtraining is the most direct and efficient form for teaching when new skills need to be learned by the counselor. Therefore, allowing the supervisor practice in teaching complete skill units, is imperative preparation for the role of supervisor.

Finally, live supervision is taught for its unique possibilities. In our training, we define live supervision as observing the session directly, and calling the counselor out of the counseling room when supervisor suggestions are warranted. Directives are then given to the counselor for implementation back in the ongoing counseling session. As with training for the other supervision models, this experience is done in simulation. This offers two advantages for participants: 1. It demands that they learn to work on their feet. Most students remark that the responsibility to respond during the session gives them a new awareness of the counselor's dilemma IN the session.
2. It gives them instant feedback about their clarity in giving suggestions. That is, as the counseling session progresses, and the counselor uses the suggestions of the supervisor, misinterpretations abound. (Another side comment regarding advantages -- because this is done in simulation, some tongue-

in-cheek suggestions can be introduced which cause a total shift in the counseling session. Much to the supervisor's surprise, some of these more outrageous suggestions are the most therapeutic!)

The third and last part of the lab is divided into a segment on evaluation, and a segment on ethical situations. Because most supervisors are better trained as therapists than as supervisors, evaluation is often a "weak suit." In the role of evaluator, the supervisor has responsibility to both the counselor and the client. This part of the training package gives the participant practice in identifying objective criteria for evaluation while staying atuned to subjective professional judgment concerning client needs. We also give an opportunity for participants to test their evaluative powers and to see how "objective" their objective evaluations actually are.

The final unit on ethical situations has two assumptions embedded in the training: 1. Many ethical dilemmas occur because of the uniqueness of a situation. Having little practice in handling the unexpected is excellent preparation for an ethical breach, if not a law suit (Cormier and Bernard, 1981). 2. The other predominant cause for ethical violations is an active avoidance on the part of the supervisor of uncomfortable situations. The training lab attempts to address both types of ethically-laden situations. Also, because this final unit stresses situation rather than skill, it serves to promote the beginning of integration. Often, concepts and language from other models help to begin the untangling of an ethical dilemma.

As you might expect, the supervision lab stimulates as many questions as it does offer training solutions. More than anything, the purpose of the lab is to whet the appetite of the participant <u>as supervisor</u> to match his or her more established appetite as therapist. I have conducted the lab several times to date, both to graduate students and more recently, to experienced therapists

and supervisors. Both groups have evaluated the training as highly valuable, although for somewhat different reasons. I would like to spend the rest of my allotted time sharing my impressions of the effect of the training package, and issues that I believe need to be addressed in the future.

One of the major assets of the laboratory is that it has taken a private activity and made it a community concern. Supervision, it seems, has been more resistant to modern technology than has counseling. As a result, supervisors have not had much opportunity to see other supervisors work using different approaches. For prepracticum students, the lab introduces a model of openness before a more secluded bias sets in. For counseling staff who are well acquainted with each other, the supervision lab has seemed to instigate a new appreciation for the talent available to all staff members if more consultation is encouraged. At a recent workshop, several counseling cases were discussed in the lab that had posed supervision problems over several months. In most instances, creative alternatives were found during the course of the lab when everyone was involved, and had new models at their disposal.

Another observation concerning trained staffs is that the identification of baseline behavior seems to be the most powerful part of their training. Because they are more established in their supervisory style, it is distinctly more dramatic for them to label their focus and role behaviors. For many, this was an eye-opener that seemed to have corrective power in its own right. In fact, experienced supervisors continued to use the language from the first part of the lab as they did later simulations, far more so than inexperienced supervisors.

On a different note, one assumption of the training laboratory has been confirmed by its use, and that is that supervisors are very likely to think of themselves as using counselor or therapist responses in their supervision. In

fact, because of this assumption, the therapist model of supervision is given very little attention during training. However, although supervisors experienced themselves as therapist-like in their supervision, an analysis of their individual responses shows that they are much more likely to use teacher responses than therapist responses. (We call this the rubber hammer approach.)

A revelation during the evaluation and ethical situation units involves the use of the consultant role. Although much of the literature would depict the consultant role as the mecca of supervision, participants become sensitive to the potential misuses of this role. They find that it is tempting to rely on the consultant role when they are uncomfortable with a situation, thus allowing the supervisee enough rope to hang him or herself before the supervisor becomes more direct. They also remark that the consultant role can mislead a weak trainee. Overall, participants discover that the consultant role is misused when it meets the supervisor's comfort needs rather than the trainee's training needs. A more discriminating look at the consultant role evolves through the lab.

While I am discussing roles, I would like to comment briefly on the teacher role. It seems that more supervisor responses fall into the teacher category than either of the other two. However, when the specific task of teaching is examined during the Microtraining unit, supervisors find themselves lacking. The fact is that teaching is a complicated process that is much more than advising a trainee on possible alternatives for counseling. Especially, the task of dividing a skill into its component parts for the purposes of teaching, seems to challenge participants of the lab. As a group, they seem much more likely to have a global sense of what they want counselors to learn than an appreciation of the specifics of the learning task. Therefore, as they progress through the lab, they often discover that they are doing more teaching than anything else, and yet they are not very good teachers! !

As I mentioned earlier, the supervisor as therapist does not receive a large amount of attention in the lab. However, this should not be interpreted as a disregard for the relationship between the supervisor and trainee. Rather, HOW this relationship should be addressed is the issue. We have found that an expansion of IPR is an excellent method for clarifying the supervisor/counselor relationship. I have recently submitted a manuscript for publication (Bernard, 1982) which expounds on this theme. IPR can be used in a dimensional fashion to focus on either counselor/client process or supervisor/counselor process. Furthermore, at the practicum level, some issues between supervisor and counselor can be examined without the presence of the counselor, using IPR, just as the client is most often not present in traditional IPR sessions. As a result, the supervisory relationship can be given the attention it is due without becoming the central focus of the supervision process itself.

As a last note, I would like to mention research issues that have emerged as a result of the supervision lab and other research thrusts we have been pursuing at Purdue that affect future training. We have recently devoted some time to the question of timing of supervision. Are certain times in relation to future counseling sessions more amenable to specific training tasks? Do roles change as a result of the timing of supervision? Does activity level of the counselor change given the proximity of future counseling? It seems thus far that the answer is in the affirmative (Couchon and Bernard, 1982). Furthermore, it seems that the supervisor is more affected by the timing of supervision than the counselor. Therefore, training of the supervisor would need to incorporate a timing component if this finding is supported by future research. We are also collecting data on the threat level, for the counselor, of different issues that come up in supervision, and how supervision relationships develop over time given the threat dimension. We are looking for typical relationships and optimal relationships. Depending on our results, it is most likely that

all issues are not equal in the eyes of the trainee, and an awareness of the threat dimension needs to be included in supervisor training. Finally, I have been collecting data concerning evaluation. My original hypothesis was that a supervisor would evaluate more critically on items reflecting his or her primary focus area. However, thus far, it seems that regardless of focus, the supervisor seems to have an evaluative theme. In other words, the supervisor's focus seems to be sensitive to differences among counselors, while evaluation reflects more of the supervisor's bias. A good deal more research needs to be conducted in the area of evaluation of counselor and supervisor performance. In fact, research in all areas of supervisor performance is greatly needed to serve as a foundation for training.

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